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# New Move Needed to Bridge Arms Gulf

By Henry S. Bradsher  
Washington Star Staff Writer

The mixed efforts to turn the Vladivostok agreement on nuclear weapons into a binding treaty are nearing a point which will require that new disarmament decisions be made at the highest American and Soviet levels, high administration sources say.

The impasse is, according to the sources, a result of a failure to agree upon, or, in at least one critical area, even to discuss vital details when

President Ford met the Soviet Communist Party General Secretary, Leonid I. Brezhnev, in Vladivostok last November.

Their hastily-arranged agreement has proven so vague that the U.S. and the Soviet Union have been unable during talks in Geneva for the last two months to pin down basic aspects of the major new arms control plan. Now another top-level political meeting to try to hammer out new agreements might be needed.

**AS ANNOUNCED** at the time, the

Vladivostok agreement set a limit on each of the two superpowers of 2,400 strategic nuclear weapons systems. These were to include no more than 1,328 missiles with multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicle (MIRV) warheads.

The agreement was announced by the Ford administration as a major breakthrough in the second stage of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, or SALT II.

But three major problems have

developed in the way the two sides interpret what was agreed upon, according to the administration sources.

The problems involve whether whole classes of missiles will be considered equipped with multiple war-

heads, or MIRVed, when one has been tested; whether the Soviet Backfire Bomber counts as a strategic nuclear weapon within the 2,400 limit; and whether new cruise missiles being developed for the old

American B52 bomber come within the agreement's limitations.

**DISAGREEMENT** is described by the official sources as complete on these points.

The question of whether whole classes of missiles have been MIRVed goes to the heart of the entire Vladivostok agreement. Administration sources said last November that without assurances on this point there could be no SALT II treaty.

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# SALT

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Now, unless the deadlock can be broken, the agreement might come unstuck, other informed sources suggest.

The Vladivostok agreement developed from

lengthy preliminary negotiations. But when President Ford went to the Soviet Far Eastern port city in November, negotiations were incomplete. The result was a general agreement to agree, but no specific agreement on what was being agreed upon.

It took two weeks after that for Soviet and American specialists to produce an aide memoire giving an outline of what was decided in Vladivostok. Each side then went home and drafted a treaty according to its own understanding of the agreement.

These two draft treaties were exchanged in meetings which began in Geneva on Jan. 30. They contain major differences.

**AFTER DISCUSSIONS** of the drafts, it has become clear, the administration sources say, that the differences are too sharp and too critical to be resolved by the negotiators in Geneva. Major political decisions are needed from Washington and Moscow.

Whether this will eventually require another meeting by Ford and Brezhnev is not yet clear. Brezhnev is

expected to visit the United States this summer at a date still to be fixed and there had been hope here that the SALT II treaty would be ready for signing then.

Some sources suggested that the problems might be taken up "on the back channel." That would mean discussions between Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and Soviet ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin.

At several earlier impasses in arms control negotiations during recent years, Kissinger and Dobrynin have worked out agreements. Sometimes the main American negotiators were not even informed — and neither were key elements within the U.S. government involved in arms control.

On the MIRVing of missiles, the U.S. position has been that the testing of any MIRV device on a class or type of missile has to be taken as proof that the entire class has been MIRVed. Therefore, if a MIRV test involving a particular type of Soviet missile is monitored by the United States, all of the known missiles of that type within the 2,400 limit would have to be counted in the 1,320 MIRV subcategory.

**AS OFTEN** happened, at earlier stages of arms control talks when the Soviets took vaguenesses for loopholes, the United States seems on this point to have failed in Vladivostok to get explicit Soviet agreement but just assumed it was all right — only to find later that it was not.

Soviet negotiators at Geneva are now refusing to allow an entire class of their missiles to be counted in the 1,320 MIRVed missile limit just because of testing. But unless they are counted, American specialists feel there will be no way of knowing that the Soviets are abiding by that aspect of a treaty.

The Soviet bomber, whose NATO code name is Backfire, was not even discussed at Vladivostok but has now become another problem.

The supersonic bomber has a greater range and payload of nuclear weaponry than the Soviet Bear bomber, which has long been accepted within the 2,400 limit of strategic nuclear systems. It has a gross weight of 272,000 pounds and with aerial refueling can reach any the United States with nuclear weapons from Soviet bases.

**THIS IS** virtually the same strategic capability as the American B1 super-



**LEONIDI I. BREZHNEV**  
New decisions?

sonic bomber, which weighs 400,000 gross. The B1, which is only being built in prototypes so far, while the Backfire is in Soviet military service, is counted within the 2,400 limit.

But the Soviet Union refuses in Geneva to accept that the Backfire should be counted. The United States feels the plane cannot safely be left out of the count because to do so would give the Soviets extra means of delivering nuclear weapons over intercontinental ranges beyond treaty limitations.

The United States is currently developing a 1,500-mile range air-launched cruise missile (ALCM) to be fired from B52 subsonic bombers. It would extend the usefulness of those aged planes and thus give more time to rethink a commitment to the vastly expensive and as a result controversial B1 program.

The Soviets contend that any missile with a range greater than 375 miles must be counted in the 2,400 strategic delivery systems. They are arguing in Geneva that the ALCM would have to come under the agreement, but U.S. negotiators say a missile which flies at relatively low levels is not the same as a ballistic missile.

The Soviets are not known to be developing anything similar to the ALCM.